

are present on either side of the road. Younger trees of many species like *Eucalyptus* spp., *Acacia nilotica*, *Pongamia glabra*, *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Delonix regia* etc. which were planted by the Forest Department from 1977 to 1980 are also seen. The famous Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur is hardly 35 km. away from this area.

During the study period a total of 439 casualties were recorded from different groups as shown in Table 1.

It is clear from Table 1 that the maximum casualties were among birds. The species-wise detail of the bird casualties is as follows (Table 2).

Peculiarities of the bird accidents:

1. Birds are the most susceptible for road accidents among vertebrates.
2. Birds remain active throughout the year hence they occur throughout the year in road accidents.
3. Aquatic birds keep away from roads

FOREST RANGE OFFICER,
WEST GULAB BAGH,
UDAIPUR - 313 001,
RAJASTHAN,
April 17, 1986.

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and remain most of the time near or inside water bodies. Due to their restricted activities in vicinity of water bodies, a minimum number among them become victims of road accidents.

4. Nocturnal birds killed in road accidents were much less in comparison to diurnal birds.

5. *Streptopelia decaocto* has the highest number of casualties.

6. A very few *Gyps bengalensis* were nesting on old Tamarind trees present on either side of the road, and their mortality rate was high. Actually most of them were killed by moving vehicles while they were scavenging on dead bodies of other animals killed in road accidents.

7. A fair number of crows were also killed. Actually 90% casualties were among younger birds, born in that year, which were quite unfamiliar to roads due to lack of experience.

8. The maximum number of birds were killed during the rainy season, from July to October.

18. DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE INDIAN ROOFED TURTLE
KACHUGA TECTA (GRAY)

(With a text-figure)

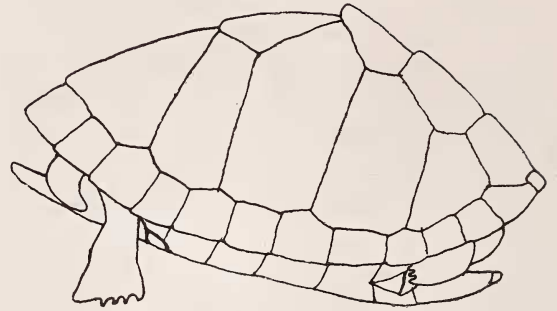
Static defensive adaptations — head, tail and appendage retraction into a shell, is seen in all emydid turtles. Box turtles of several genera from both the Old and New Worlds, in addition possess single or double hinges in the plastron, allowing them to cover, partially or completely, their retracted parts.

When alarmed, the Indian roofed turtle

Kachuga tecta retracts its head, tail and appendages readily into its shell. However, in the absence of hinges in the plastron, the species is vulnerable to some degree of predation, especially from land-based predators, even after pulling in the projecting body parts into the shell. In this position, physical threat such as a light touch to the turtle's head or fore-

limbs makes the hindlimbs fully extended and planted vertically or obliquely to the substrate, while the head, tail and forelimbs are retained within the shell, thereby raising the posterior part of the shell considerably. In an 8.2 cm. (carapace length) specimen, the plastron was raised by 2 cm. Following adoption of the posture, the turtle may attempt to move forward, using its hind limbs, maintaining this unusual posture till suitable shelter is reached.

Evidently, the species assumes this defensive posture, as the head and forelimbs are given additional protection, being lowered close to the ground. Possibly turtles encountered by predators while wandering on land assume the posture, which gives some measure of protection to the exposed parts on the anterior opening of the shell, and may additionally con-



2 cm.

Fig. 1. Response of the Indian roofed turtle *Kachuga tecta* when physical contact is made to the retracted head and forelimbs.

found some of the land-dwelling predators, thereby giving them several moments to proceed towards the relative safety of water.

18/20, BALLYGUNGE PLACE (EAST),
CALCUTTA - 700 019,
April 23, 1986.

INDRANEIL DAS

19. AN INCIDENCE OF A GECKO (*HEMIDACTYLUS* SP.) FEEDING ON A SKINK

One evening in the last week of March, 1987, we were taking a stroll about a litter strewn portion of our garden in the midst of Madras city, when we heard some strange rustling noises from beneath a Laurel tree. On investigation, we witnessed a short struggle between a gecko and a skink. The gecko had grabbed the skink by the base of the tail, and for a few seconds, we saw the skink thrashing about frantically. The victim then shed its tail and made good its escape, leaving the tail-piece wriggling in the captor's jaws. The gecko quickly gobbled up the offered morsel of the tail-end and disappeared into the litter.

The gecko was in all probability the tree gecko, *Hemidactylus leschenaulti*, which is a common dweller in the city gardens (Shekar Dattatri, pers. comm.). The skink appeared uniform dark brown all over with no stripes or markings, and was probably a sub-adult *Mabuya carinata*. Both predator and prey were about 5 inches in length.

There are two records of *H. leschenaulti* feeding on vertebrate prey. Sumithran (1982) observed the reptile feeding on a mouse, and later on, Dattatri (1984) reported a case of a *leschenaulti* predating on the sympatric